

## Removal of Signs and Inscriptions Policy

General Services Administration (GSA) is authorized under the provisions of the 40 U.S.C. 101 to dispose of surplus property. The disposal of real property assets require that GSA's Public Building Service (PBS) establish and maintain a process that effectively and efficiently terminates the use of these assets when the Government no longer has a need for them. This process for removing unneeded space from the Federal inventory includes removal of Government signage and inscriptions prior to disposal.

The removal of Federal agency signage is necessary to demonstrate that the Government no longer has a presence in, or control of, a building or facility. The policy below provides assistance to GSA's regions and customer agencies on the responsibilities and proper methods of the removal of signage and inscriptions.

### Scope

The removal of signage and inscriptions in this policy covers owned buildings and facilities that have been under the jurisdiction, custody or control of GSA but are no longer owned or occupied by the Federal Government, including buildings delegated to other Federal agencies by the Administrator of General Services. This guidance also covers the removal of signage in surplus properties controlled by other Federal agencies if GSA is handling the property disposal. This policy covers interior signage such as memorial plaques, honor rolls and seals that are attached to a building's interior or exterior. Applicable signage may also include inscriptions, wall tablets, and seals that are integrated into the building structure, as well as freestanding signage on land owned by the Federal Government. This policy does not address the removal of signage in Government occupied leased space since it is outside the scope of this document and is adequately addressed in the waiver of restoration provisions in the PBS lease.

### Definitions

#### - Signage Types

***Interior signage.*** This category includes all signage related to a building's Government occupancy or use and installed by GSA or other Federal agencies inside the building envelope.

***Building and Occupant identification.*** These designations provide building ownership information, agency, room, and floor identification, directional information, and regulatory and security information.

***Memorial plaques and honor rolls.*** These designations honor individuals for service or achievements in support of a Federal Government agency mission, policy, or civic purpose.

***Exterior signage.*** This category includes signage installed on the outside of a building and freestanding signage on land owned by the Federal Government.

***Freestanding signs.*** These are signs constructed on the land to designate a building by its principal occupying agencies or to provide regulatory, security or directional information.

***Interior and exterior signage.*** This category encompasses signage installed that can be found either inside or outside a building or facility.

***Inscriptions.*** These designations refer to the historical name or association of a building or site. Inscriptions are normally integrated into the building structure at the time of a building's construction, at the direction of the building owner.

***Wall tablets.*** These designations provide information about significant events, individuals or organizations associated with the building and are typically made of brass or darkened bronze. Tablets are usually installed by either GSA or a customer agency, but they occasionally installed by a nonprofit organization in cooperation with the Government.

***Agency Seals and the Great Seal of the United States.*** These symbolic representations designate occupant agencies in a building or show Federal ownership of the building or facility. These designations are installed by GSA or a customer agency.

## **- Building Types**

***GSA Government-owned.*** Includes buildings and facilities that come under the jurisdiction, custody or control of GSA, including Federal buildings where the GSA Administrator has delegated maintenance and operational responsibilities to an occupying Federal agency. Buildings in this group include GSA-controlled historic buildings that are subject to National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) Section 106 compliance requirements.

***Agency owned.*** Includes buildings owned by Federal agencies other than GSA. In this circumstance, an agency requests that GSA dispose of a property that is surplus to the Government's needs. These properties may also include historic buildings requiring NHPA compliance.

## **Process to Remove Signage**

### ***GSA-owned buildings***

#### ***Non-historic buildings***

These are buildings that are surplus to GSA needs and must not be disposed of prior to removal of signage that indicates U.S. occupancy and ownership. The region overseeing the property must remove all signage indicating the Government building name, owner or agency occupants, including agency

divisions, departments and personnel. Signage providing images of, or information on, the President or Vice President, an agency or department head, Administrator or Commissioner, or Regional Administrator, or agency occupants (including division, department, and agency identification) must also be removed, as well as Government seals, wall tablets, freestanding signs, memorial plaques, and honor rolls.

Signs providing information not specific to Government's use, such as the date of the building's construction, should generally be retained in place. Where removal of inscriptions in stone or other architectural materials may result in defacement of a building facade, other alternatives for demonstrating the termination of Government ownership and occupancy may be explored with GSA, on a case-by-case basis. The cost to remove signage at all GSA Government-owned buildings and at those buildings undergoing disposal must be the responsibility of GSA.

Site-specific memorials and interpretive signage that does not misrepresent a building as government-owned or occupied may be retained on a case-by-case basis, in consultation with the agency, transferee, and GSA.

#### *Historic buildings*

40 U.S.C. Section 484(k) (3) authorizes conveyance of historic properties to States, political subdivisions, their instrumentalities or municipalities for the benefit of the public. Historic building disposals ☐ whether by public benefit transfer, negotiated sale, or public sale ☐ require transfer documents identifying stewardship responsibilities to be assumed by the transferee, in compliance with NHPA Section 106. Section 106 compliance generally concludes with a memorandum of agreement (MOA) identifying the building's significant materials, features, and spaces, with procedures for planning and review of alterations to ensure the long-term protection of qualities that contribute to the building's significance.

GSA's Regional Historic Preservation Officer (RHPO) coordinates Section 106 review and should be consulted early in the disposal process to identify historic signage that may need to be preserved. Original, architecturally integrated signs, such as building construction dates or names inscribed in the façade will generally need to be retained in place, in addition to historically significant signs mounted on interior walls and ceilings. Transfers involving prominent landmarks may require that the transferee retain the building's historic name, adding appropriate signage indicating that the property is no longer owned and occupied by the Federal Government. In some cases, memorial plaques or freestanding interpretive signs will need to be retained or installed by the transferee to meet MOA stipulations. Interpretive signage may be required to acknowledge the Government's contribution to the preservation of the property.

Signage that must be removed, if not identified as historically significant, includes signs identifying the building name or building owner, information on a President or Vice President, an agency or department head, Administrator or Commissioner or Regional Administrator, agency occupants, (including division, department, and agency identification), Government seals, memorial plaques, and honor rolls.

***Agency-owned buildings.*** These are buildings that are surplus to the Federal Government where a Federal agency has requested that GSA dispose of an agency-controlled property. Buildings require the removal of signage that indicates U.S. occupancy and ownership. Types of signage that require removal include all non-historic signage stating the building name, building owner, information on a President, agency identification, occupants, or departments. Building construction dates and directional signage unrelated to Government ownership or use should be retained.

At historic buildings, architecturally integrated signs indicating original or early names by which the building is known in the community will generally need to be retained in place, in addition to historically significant directional signs mounted on interior walls and ceilings (room number, stair and elevator signs). Signs to be retained may include original names of buildings acquired by the Federal Government (e.g., Winder Building) as well as names designating community landmarks (e.g., Post Office, Custom House).

Seals, wall tablets, freestanding signs, and honor rolls associated with the Federal Government occupancy or use and not identified as historically significant must be removed.

Site-specific memorials and interpretive signage that do not misrepresent the building as government-owned and occupied may be retained on a case-by-case basis, in consultation with the agency, transferee, and GSA.

GSA's RHPO or the property controlling agency's Federal Preservation Officer must coordinate with the State Historic Preservation Officer and other consulting parties, in compliance with Section 106 of the NHPA, to identify historic signage to be preserved, such as original building names inscribed on the façade of a building. The RHPO or FPO must also negotiate MOA terms concerned with the preservation of historic signage.

Original, architecturally integrated signs, such as building names inscribed in the facade, will generally need to be retained in place, in addition to historically significant signs mounted on interior walls and ceilings. Transfers involving prominent landmarks may require that the transferee retain the building's historic name, adding appropriate signage indicating that the property is no longer owned and occupied by the Federal Government. In some cases, memorial plaques or

freestanding interpretive signs will need to be retained or installed by the transferee to meet MOA stipulations.

### **Responsibility for Funding and Removal of Building Signage**

The cost to remove signage at GSA controlled buildings is GSA's responsibility. At non-GSA buildings the responsibility to fund and remove signage belongs to building owner. If an agency that disposes of a building is unable to remove the Government signage prior to disposal, GSA can undertake the responsibility for the agency on a reimbursable basis.

### **Signage That Does Not Require Removal**

Directional signage unrelated to Federal Government occupancy or use does not require removal. Directional signage to be retained unless specific transfer arrangements warrant otherwise includes signage containing general parking information, non-tritium containing emergency exits, floor and room numbers, restrooms, stairs, telephones, elevators, escalators, and loading docks.

### **Disposition Management**

Because of their potential value or health and environmental hazard, excess materials should be properly characterized prior to disposal. When possible, sign removal shall be accomplished in a manner that will facilitate maximum opportunities for reuse or recycling. Painted surfaces and signs that contain self-powered light sources have a high probability of containing toxins and should be managed in accordance with applicable regulatory governing standards.

### **GSA Headquarters Coordination**

The removal of signage at buildings that require disposal should be coordinated as needed with the Office of Portfolio Management, Office of Real Property Utilization and Disposal. The treatment of historic signage in GSA owned historic properties, as well as historic properties conveyed to GSA for disposal, must be coordinated with the RHPO.